



Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A system, method and computer program product for promoting targeted purchasing and fan loyalty to sports and entertainment celebrities - and the products and causes they promote and endorse- through the use of:

an embedded integrated circuit (IC) device, such as that found in the smart card and other devices using IC technology, which offers fans of sports and entertainment celebrities memory and microprocessing capabilities (including "contact" and "contact-less" devices) and which either displays or contains the images, names, logos, or other identifying monikers and/or elements of celebrities on or in any device using IC technology;

an application service provider (ASP) for all hardware, software, and infrastructure needs and support, including data base management;

a smart card terminal or other IC technology reading device connected either to the user's PC or Macintosh computer, or a merchant's terminal.

a computer program product working in conjunction with smart cards and other IC devices that provide the fans seamless and instant Internet connection to the chosen celebrities' fan club Web sites as a point of entry to the Web, a Web store operated by an application service provider (ASP), maneuverability and efficiencies while searching and shopping on the Web, and tangible, on or off-line paybacks and benefits in return for the fans' loyalty to their chosen celebrities;

a set of special software programs offering password-protected, hierarchical access to not only the celebrities' fan club pages, but also to the celebrities' preferred cross-marketing links, as well as downloadable and updatable homework help links for students, fan rewards for travel and related services, and data storage and retrieval, such as ship-to and bill-to names and addresses for convenience when shopping on-line, and for storage of the individual's favorite web site Universal Resource Locators (URLs);

2. The smart card or other integrated circuit (IC) system as defined in claim 1 uses multiple user platforms – including but not limited to an IBM™ or compatible personal computer (PC) running the Microsoft® Windows 95/98™ or Windows NT™ operating system, a Macintosh® computer running the Mac® OS operating system or the like – in combination with a programmed - and programmable – smart card, or other IC device, to facilitate and enhance not only Internet maneuverability, efficiencies, and services for the fan, but also off-line benefits for shopping, travel, dining, car rentals, and related services, when conducted in conjunction with participating merchants.

3. The system as defined in claim 1 distributes special programmed code logic through a CD-Rom disc, or other media, to the fan's hard drive, enabling the fan's computer terminal to read what is on the smart card and to download additional software directly from the ASP's web site, once the card is inserted into the terminal.
4. The system as defined in claim 1 allows for updates from the ASP that keep the fans' discounts and rewards packages current through a graphical user interface (GUI) on the ASP's web site component, which allows fans to enter and save to the smart card their favorite, password-protected Universal Resource Locators (URLs), multiple credit card account information (including other smart cards), and "ship to" and "bill to" drag and drop information.
5. The special software programs as defined in claim 1 reside on the user's hard drive – once they are loaded into the hard drive, either through CD-Rom or other such device, or through a direct download from the ASP's Web site – and use the code logic therein that allows the software to communicate with the user's terminal, read what is on the smart card, and load new data to the card.
6. The special software programs as defined in claim 1 use the invention's EZ Net program to access the SmartKids Homework Links component of the invention - connecting younger users to programmed, educational URLs and saving hours of searching time - and allowing for downloading of the user's personal choice URLs.
7. The special software programs as defined in claims 1, 5 and 6 communicate with the smart card once it is inserted into the terminal, and the software communicates with the browser, first taking the user instantly and seamlessly to the celebrity's fan club Web site, then to related links accessed from that Web site.
8. The method as defined in claim 1 relates to distributing the smart card either through a starter kit containing the card with the celebrity's photographic image, name, logo, or other identifying moniker or symbol, a program CD-Rom, and a smart card terminal or reader, or through an expansion kit containing only the celebrity smart card and program CD-Rom.
9. The method as defined in claim 1 relates to using an embedded integrated circuit (IC) device, such as a smart card, as the vehicle for connecting fans to their favorite sports and entertainment celebrities and providing those fans with both on and off-line rewards and paybacks for their loyalty to their chosen celebrities.